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ABSTRACT

The development of goals and objectives for intercollegiate athletic programs and for athletes is discussed by Xavier University's vice-president for student development. Usually there is a combination of institutional goals such as using athletics to produce revenue or to recruit students, or achieving growth in participation in intercollegiate athletics. Once goals are established, additional issues to be considered might include: how honest, competitive, or commercial the athletic program is to be. Another step is to decide who will be in charge of the program. If the goal is primarily fund raising, athletics should be under the development office, while if athletics is seen as an extension of academics, the academic vice president might supervise the program. Additional concerns include: career development for the student athlete; review of the disciplinary system and the treatment of athletes; decision-making about whether the athlete's health permits playing in a game; the question of whether student athletes have the same opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities as nonathletes; methods for distributing financial aid to athletes; academic and personal advising for athletes; and review of the athletic department's practices. (SW)

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Putting Intercollegiate Athletics and the College Athlete in Perspective

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Student athletes are different from other students. They have different needs, different pressures, different concerns and different opportunities. They, like other special populations (international students, disabled students, adult students), require special attention. In fact, since many of the obstacles they face are created by the university, we have a special responsibility to assist these students.

Very few non-athletes could endure the time demands as well as the psychological and physiological demands that an athlete endures. Many athletes have problems handling these pressures; they are loved and hated, admired and rejected. While administrators often enjoy the revenue they create, fellow students and faculty often see them as a "special class" of pampered, spoiled individuals. We hear that large numbers of them do not graduate. (This incidentally, is not true; their graduation rate is higher than that of non-athletes.) At this time, the media is full of advice about the proper role of intercollegiate athletes. As administrators in American colleges and universities, we must take the lead in this dialogue. We must ensure that we have agreed upon goals and objectives for our intercollegiate athletic programs and that our intercollegiate athletes are seen within the perspective of these goals.

Our first task, then, is to establish clearly delineated goals and objectives. Our goal may be to use athletics as a revenue producing activity for the institution, a means by which the institution can gain fame and visibility. Our goal may be to use athletics primarily as a recruitment tool. Another option would be to stress maximum participation as the goal of our intercollegiate athletic program and we would measure success by the number of students who were involved in the program.

Usually, an institution has set some combination of the above objectives. For example, one institution wants to have at least one showcase team that achieves national prominence.

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They want to have a regional sport that is well recognized, and they have established a goal of 10% growth in participation in their intercollegiate program for female athletes during the next three years. Another institution wants total balance in its programs and wants to compete regionally in each of them. Their goal is a respectable record in each sport and regional recognition. Does your institution have clearly articulated goals? Are they understood by the Athletic Department, faculty, alumni, and student body?

Once goals are established within an institution, some other issues must be considered: 1) How honest is the program to be? 2) How exploitive is the program to be? 3) How commercial is the program to be?

In answering the first question, the institution must decide whether or not it will comply with both the letter and the spirit of the appropriate athletic governing association. Athletic programs in our country are treated in a fashion similar to the 55 MPH speed limit and to the way individuals handle their income tax. Everybody, it seems, expects a little cheating; the question is, how much? Each institution must decide for itself where it will draw its parameters.

The second question may seem strange, as institutions usually do not see themselves as exploitive, but intercollegiate athletics by definition tend to exploit the athlete. Since the average basketball player must miss between one quarter and one third of his other classes each semester simply to participate in away basketball games, certainly we are making it difficult for these individuals to compete successfully in the classroom. Is the school going to allow games during examination periods? Will they allow the team to travel to away games a day early so they may settle in and get prepared for the game? Will student athletes be allowed to participate in other extracurricular activities or other programs of their own choosing? How exploitive will the program be?

The third question relates to the funding of athletics. How much time will the university spend in dealing with the commercial needs of the programs, the business of athletics? Will you accept money from beer companies, a loaded question today since the beer industry is the major sponsor of intercollegiate athletics in this country? Will you distribute their give-aways during the current climate of discussion about the appropriate role of alcohol on our campuses? Will you allow your coaches to appear in commercial advertisements for a local industry that is helping to pay for your program? How much commercialism are you going to allow into the program?

Once you have made the decision about the goals of the program and how you are going to respond to these three questions, you

can then decide who will be in charge of the program. If the goal is primarily fund raising, clearly athletics should be under the Development Office. If athletics is to be treated as an auxiliary business enterprise, certainly the Business Affairs Vice President should supervise athletics. If athletics is seen as an extention of academics where the issue of balance between mind, body and spirit is being stressed, the Academic Vice President should supervise athletics. And if athletics is seen as some combination of the above, where you wish to ensure the student athlete's needs are considered, where their own growth and development is a primary issue, and yet there is a recognition of the development and commercial aspects of athletics, you may want the Student Development Vice President to supervise the activity. Indeed, in many institutions, the President may feel the need to supervise the program. Wherever the program fits in the administrative hierarchy, each of the senior offices of the university has a vital role to play.

If your concern is to respond to the needs of the intercollegiate athlete, I suggest you may want to review the athletic department's response to a number of student and academic affairs issues. For example, the issue of housing should be addressed. Are athletes allowed to live where they choose? Is their housing assignment controlled by the coach? Are they given the opportunity to interact with other students or are they clustered together? Is discipline for the athlete handled by the housing staff or by the athletic staff? Do they get special privileges, such as single rooms, suites, or apartments, that many other students do not receive?

The Career Planning and Placement Service is another interesting area to investigate. On many campuses, the athletic coaches can be quite successful in helping their athletes find lucrative part-time jobs. In terms of career development or assisting students in developing the skills necessary to go on to graduate school or full-time employment, the athletic department usually is not as skilled as the Career Planning and Placement Service. Do athletes get introduced to this service, learn about resume preparation, interview skills, etc.? Do they have an opportunity to interact with this office fully, or is there a special placement operation for the athletes which, in the long run, is not to their advantage?

The disciplinary system is another place to look to review treatment of athletes. A thorny issue immediately emerges. Disciplinary probation, a typical penalty for an average student, may not be a very strong penalty to the great many students not involved in co-curricular life. If they are forbidden to participate in activities outside the classroom, it may have minimal impact. For the athlete, however, the outcome can be catastrophic. How does the disciplinary system

respond to this fact? Who controls the disciplinary system, the coach or the traditional disciplinary officer? Are athletes subject to "double jeopardy" whereby the coach may have them run laps or punish them in some other way for a non-athletic violation? Are the penalties assigned to athletes made more public than they are to other students? Whereas most disciplinary procedures on our campuses are cognizant of the Buckley Amendment, we tend to read about athletes who violated our rules in the public press when this information is allowed to leak.

Does the coach have the authority to set rules that do not impact directly on performance to the athletic fields? Do athletes have a different dress code than other students? Are they required to attend a study hall not required of others? While a curfew or attendance at a training table before a game does relate to an athletes performance, it is hard to see the same relationship in a certain style of dress.

Does the athlete have the same access to physicians that other students have? Many teams have "team doctors" whose primary relationship is with the coaches, not with each individual athlete. The nature of the relationship between a physician and an athlete (collegiate or professional) has become a controversial issue within the medical profession. Who decides when an athlete can play? Is his or her long-run best interest always considered? Is the decision to play, train, practice, etc. made by the athlete or is it made by the team physician? When a campus health service is involved, inevitably the campus physician works directly with the student without any third party involvement and the student makes the decision himself. For the athlete, however, a third party is often involved, and some tricky ethical questions can emerge. Do athletes on your campus have the same rights to medical care as do non-athletes?

Do student athletes have the same opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities as non-athletes? While it is clear that the athletes' time and availability may be limited, and it may not be possible for them to participate in certain extracurricular activities, do they have the full freedom to participate as enjoyed by other students? Are their special needs taken into consideration? If they want to run for office and cannot attend a certain meeting because their team is on the road, is there flexibility to respond to this need?

One fascinating way to look at how an institution treats its athletes relates to the food they are given. Most coaches would agree that it is essential to have a training meal before a game with appropriate nutritional value. While the coaches disagree vigorously as to what the appropriate menu should be, there is very little disagreement with the fact that an athlete's diet can affect his performance on the field. Do they always

have special menus? There is substantial literature indicating that the campus dining room is a prime source of social intercourse for students on our campuses today. Are athletes free, both officially and unofficially, to choose with whom they sit when they eat? When athletes are given meal money on the road, is the amount reasonable and appropriate? Do all teams get the same amount? Do men and women get the same amount?

An interesting perspective on the role of a college athlete can be attained by observing the method for disbursing financial assistance to them. Are athletes required to file for financial aid even if they are being given a full athletic scholarship? Are they required to get all the federal and state money that is available to them and return it to the institution? Are the same deadlines used for athletes as non-athletes in implementing the financial aid program?

Another indicator of the role of the athlete on campus can be their relationship with the Minority Affairs Office. Since many of our athletes are minority students, does the Athletic Office coordinate its efforts with the Minority Affairs Office? Is the individual in charge of that office encouraged to interact with athletes? Do the athletes serve as role models for other minority students and get involved with issues of concern to all students?

Most campuses have an Orientation Program. Do athletes, particularly those who participate in fall sports, attend the regular Orientation Program, or is there a special orientation for them? At the very beginning of their college careers, when it is so important for college students to establish relationships, are athletes singled out for separate attention?

Is the academic advisement system for athletes parallel to that which is available to non-athletes? Is there an adviso for athletes who works with the Academic Deans and Vice President? Do athletes have the same freedom to take classes with whomever they wish or does the Athletic Department choose their teachers? Is there a system whereby they can take exams at different times if the exam schedule conflicts with the game schedule? Is feedback to coaches handled in the same way that feedback is given to other academic advisors, in light of the Buckley Amendment? If special tutors are available to athletes, how are they remunerated? How does the remuneration compare with that of other tutors on campus?

Even counseling services can be an area in which athletes lack the rights of fellow students. Is there a special "Athletic Counselor?" Does he or she adhere to the same rules of confidentiality required of other counselors? Are

there special programs to deal with issues that athletes tend to face, including stress, time management, handling negative feedback, loneliness, etc.? Is the athletic staff active in supporting athletes' participation in group and individual counseling opportunities?

Another particularly interesting area to inspect is Campus Ministry. It's fascinating to find that at many religious institutions there is a chaplain assigned to the basketball or football team. What does this chaplain do? Is it not ironic to find a priest on the bench of many basketball teams, where few, if any, of the competitors are Catholic, and where some coaches respond to the ups and downs of competition in a negative and very vocal manner? Is it an appropriate role for Campus Ministry?

The Athletic Department itself is an area to investigate in understanding the treatment of athletes on the college campus. Do all athletes have equal access to resources? Do the men's and women's teams have the same opportunity to use the various practice, training, and game facilities? Do they have a special weight room? Do they have better lockers, etc.? Do the high revenue teams get special treatment? Are the salaries and rights and responsibilities of the coaches comparable for all sports? Is there an evaluation system in place for the coaches that parallels the evaluation system for other university employees? Who supervises athlete recruitment or ensures that NCAA rules are enforced? (In discovering the answers to these last two questions, you can find out if the athletic department does indeed adhere to the goals that have been developed for the university.) When problems occur, how are grievances handled within the athletic department? Is the Minority Affairs Office involved or the affirmative action officer, or is everything handled internally?

The final area to explore is that of the faculty. Do they involve themselves with the athletic program? Is there an athletic oversight committee that has clearly delineated responsibilities and that effectively administers these responsibilities? Are faculty aware of the impact of the athletic program or the institution? Do they understand the details required for administering an effective athletic program?

The NCAA says that the majority of the members must be faculty or administrators. Is this guideline followed? Is the board balanced between those who identify with athletics and those who will raise questions? Is there a faculty representative to the NCAA who was properly trained and supported?

In summary, if a university is truly concerned with the intercollegiate athlete and with understanding the role of its intercollegiate athletic program, it must first set clear goals for the program. It must decide the perimeters within which the program will function, and it must ensure that each of its academic, student affairs, and administrative services responds to the athletes meeting their special needs while protecting their rights as students. The university must ensure that its athletes are not treated as a separate and unequal group, but as individual college students who are struggling with the competing needs of their academic, athletic, and personal lives.